

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 2317

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PINR, PO, OEXC

SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC UPDATE ON MINISTER OF LABOR

REFS: (A) LISBON 2192

(B) USDAO LISBON 486 AUGUST 74

(C) USDAO LISBON IR 6 879 0189 74

(D) USDAO IR 6878 0140 U5

1. BY REFERENCE (A) EMBASSY NOMINATED MINISTER OF LABOR COSTA MARTINS FOR FY-1975 LEADER GRANT TRAVEL. FOLLOWING BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SUBMITTED TO UPDATE REFERENCES (B), (C), AND (D).

2. JOSE INACIO DA COSTA MARTINS WAS BORN JULY 1, 1938, IN MESSINES (NEAR SILVES AND LAGOS) IN THE ALGARVE, ONE OF POOREST REGIONS OF PORTUGAL. HE ENTERED AIR FORCE AS ENLISTED MAN AND ATTAINED RANK OF SERGEANT. SELECTED FOR AERONAUTICS COURSE AT MILITARY ACADEMY IN 1964. PROMOTED TO SECOND LIEUTENANT IN 1965, FIRST LIEUTENANT IN 1966, CAPTAIN IN 1969, MAJOR IN 1975. FOREIGN TRAVEL, UNTIL RECENT OFFICIALS VISITS, BELIEVED LIMITED TO SERVICE IN ANGOLA, 1965-69.

3. COSTA MARTINS WAS APPOINTED AS A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE BY GENERAL SPINOLA ON MAY 31, 1974. HE BECAME MINISTER OF LABOR ON JULY 17, 1974, FOLLOWING THE RESIGNATION OF THE PALMA CARLOS CABINET, A POSITION HE HAS HELD IN EACH OF THE TWO SUCCEEDING PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENTS. ALTHOUGH HE HAS ACQUIRED SOMETHING OF A POPULAR FOLLOWING, COSTA MARTINS' PRIMARY POWER BASE IS STILL WITH THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM), WHERE HE
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IS A MEMBER OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE AFM, AND IS

INVOLVED WITH SEVERAL MINISTERIAL-LEVEL COMMISSIONS INCLUDING THE NEWLY ORGANIZED ECONOMIC COMMISSION. COSTA MARTINS EARNED HIS PRECEDENCE IN THE AFM, BY LEADING THE UNIT WHICH TOOK OVER LISBON AIRPORT AND THE ADJOINING MILITARY INSTALLATIONS DURING THE APRIL 25 REVOLUTION.

4. WHEN COSTA MARTINS' APPOINTMENT AS MINISTER OF LABOR WAS FIRST ANNOUNCED, IT WAS THOUGHT THAT HIS COMPARATIVE YOUTH AND LACK OF EXPERIENCE IN GOVERNMENT WEIGHED AGAINST A LONG TENURE. HOWEVER, HIS ENERGETIC APPROACH, ACCESSABILITY TO WORKERS, AND HIS SUCCESS IN CONCILIATING LABOR DISPUTES SOON MADE HIM ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN AND MOST POPULAR LEADERS OF THE AFM. SOME OF COSTA MARTINS' POPULAR GLOW HAS DISSIPATED RECENTLY DUE TO INEFFICIENCIES IN THE NEWLY ORGANIZED MINISTRY OF LABOR. PORTUGAL'S RUDIMENTARY SYSTEM OF LABOR RELATIONS SOON PLACES ANY SERIOUS LABOR PROBLEM IN THE LAP OF THE MINISTRY, WHICH IS OVERLOADED BY CURRENT WAVE OF LABOR PROBLEMS. THOSE PROBLEMS REACHING MINISTER'S ATTENTION ARE USUALLY RESOLVED, OFTEN WITH SATISFACTION ON BOTH SIDES. UNFORTUNATELY THE MINISTER'S MULTIPLE DUTIES DETRACT FROM HIS PERFORMANCE AS MINISTER AND HIS THREE SECRETARIES OF STATE AND HIS CHIEF OF CABINET HAVE GREATER THAN NORMAL LEEWAY IN CONDUCTING THE AFFAIRS OF THE MINISTRY. THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE APPOINTED BY COSTA MARTINS' PREDECESSOR AS MINISTER, (A COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER), AND WERE RETAINED BY COSTA MARTINS "UNTIL THEY DEMONSTRATE THEY ARE UNWORTHY." THE POLITICAL VIEWS AND MACHINATIONS OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL OF THESE SECOND-LEVEL OFFICIALS, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR LABOR CARLOS CARVALHAS, HAVE CAUSED THE MINISTER'S DETRACTORS TO CLAIM THAT HE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE MINISTRY, AND THAT OTHERS IN THE CABINET SOMETIMES READ HIS MAIL BEFORE HE DOES. THE EMBASSY CONSIDERS THIS AN OVERLY STRONG ASSESSMENT BUT THE MINISTER DOES GIVE IT SOME SUBSTANCE BY HIS OBVIOUS ENJOYMENT OF SOCIAL OCCASIONS, WHICH HE ATTENDS FREQUENTLY AND SOMETIMES TO THE DETRIMENT OF HIS OFFICIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

5. THE MINISTER'S POLITICAL VIEWS ARE BELIEVED TO BE POPULIST, OPPORTUNISTIC, UNSOPHISTICATED, AND WELL-INTENTIONED. IN LATE 1974 HE REPORTEDLY HAD TO BE DISSUADED AGAINST INITIATING LIBEL ACTION AGAINST A NEWSPAPERMAN WHO DESCRIBED HIM AS A "COMMUNIST."
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ALTHOUGH HIS MINISTRY HAS FROM TIME TO TIME PURSUED POLICIES FAVORABLE TO THE PCP'S DOMINATION OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT, THE MINISTER HIMSELF HAS BEEN EVEN-HANDED IN THOSE MATTERS IN WHICH HE HAS TAKEN A ROLE.

6. COSTA MARTINS HAS POLITICAL AMBITIONS. IN OCTOBER 1974, HE TOLD EMBASSY'S ASSISTANT AIR ATTACHE THAT HE WAS THINKING OF FORMING HIS OWN LABOR PARTY AND SOMEDAY WOULD LIKE TO RUN

FOR THE PRESIDENCY OF PORTUGAL.

7. THE MINISTER IS SEPARATED AND MAY BE DIVORCED. HE REPORTEDLY HAD A FINANCIAL MISUNDERSTANDING WITH HIS WIFE'S FAMILY. HE ENJOYS COMPANY OF YOUNG WOMEN AND CAFE SOCIETY. HE HAS A BARE KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH. AS AN AIR FORCE OFFICER COSTA MARTINS WAS KNOWN FOR CONFRONTATIONS WITH AUTHORITY, HAVING BEEN DISCIPLINED FOR INSUBORDINATION. HOWEVER, TO THE EMBASSY'S KNOWLEDGE, THE MINISTER IS UNFAILINGLY POLITE, DEFERENTIAL, AND SOFT-SPOKEN.

8. IN BRIEF, COSTA MARTINS IS A POLITICALLY UNSOPHISTICATED AIR FORCE PILOT THRUST INTO A JOB OF IMMENSE POLITICAL CHALLENGE. HIS ABILITY TO HANDLE HIMSELF, LEARNING ALL THE WAY, IS MANIFEST. HIS WILLINGNESS TO LEARN IS EVIDENT FROM HIS OFFICIAL VISITS TO SWEDEN, THE UK, AND THE SOVIET UNION. HIS PRESENT AND POLITICAL IMPORTANCE IS EVIDENT FROM THE HIGH-LEVEL TREATMENT HE RECEIVED IN THESE COUNTRIES. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES HE IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFLUENCE AND REPEATS ITS BELIEF THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO EXTEND AN INVITATIONAL GRANT TO MINISTER COSTA MARTINS, WANTS AND ALL.

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